Family to Family

El Paso County, Colorado

Team Decision Making Protocol

Draft

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Purpose and Philosophy -Team Based Decision Making

Team Decision Making (TDM) is a process whereby child welfare staff, family members, providers of services and neighborhood representatives collaboratively address safety needs for children. The goal of TDM is to improve the agency's decision-making process whenever the following events in a case occur:

- an initial placement is considered
- an emergency placement has occurred
- a placement move is being considered
- return home to parents or guardians.

It is a model that focuses on building upon family strengths as opposed to fixing deficits. It actively seeks and welcomes community participation in making these difficult decisions by inviting community persons and agencies to take part in TDM and thereby becoming more involved in the creation of innovative, individualized alternative plans for children. Family members are empowered to fully participate and work in collaboration to address the safety of their children. The first and foremost priority is always safety and protection of children. The TDM process identifies needs, resources and community supports which results in a more comprehensive support network for families. Through this inclusive process, more informed decisions can be made which are owned by the team and community. The overall goal of this TDM process is to reach a consensus on a plan that protects children while preserving families or reunifying them in a safe manner.

The Core Beliefs underlying the TDM Process in El Paso County are as follows:

- 1. Family members should always be invited to attend all TDM meetings. Child participation should be based on age and appropriateness. Families should be encouraged to bring anyone who is or might become part of their support system.
- 2. Families should be viewed as the experts on their own families. They should be full participants in decision-making as solutions and plans are developed. Families are capable of making decisions that will keep their families safe.
- 3. The safety and emotional well being of children is always the highest priority. Out-of-home placement should only be used when no alternatives exist or can be created that will ensure the child's safety. When a child must be placed, reunification with parent(s) or guardian is to be the focus whenever this can be accomplished safely.
- 4. Everyone present at TDM meetings must be treated with dignity and respect. Ideas deserve everyone's full attention. Blame is not helpful and tends to drive families away from utilizing services offered by professionals. Honesty and "straight talk", however, is are highly valued and encouraged.
- 5. Cultural differences must always be honored and respected.

- 6. The time and place for the TDM meeting should be based on family need and preference while still ensuring safety for all concerned.
- 7. When a decision is made to leave a child in the home, the members of the TDM must develop a safety plan before the meeting ends. Such plans and solutions should be individualized to fit the unique needs of each child and family and should be based on strengths as well as needs. The goal should be to "custom fit" the services to the family when traditional services are not appropriate.
- 8. All families have strengths. It is easier to bring about positive change by building upon these strengths rather than solely trying to "fix" perceived deficits. Strengths can often be found in family attitudes, values, skills, abilities, attributes, features, preferences, and in circumstances where the problem doesn't exist.
- 9. Information gathered during the meeting is personal. Team members should respect the family's privacy. Therefore, further discussion about the family outside the meeting will be permissible only for case planning and the safety and protection of the child(ren).

TEAM-DECISION MAKING PRE-MEETING GUIDELINES

REQUESTING A TDM

When a caseworker and his/her supervisor determine the need for a TDM, the caseworker contacts the designated support staff person by telephone. During this telephone contact, support staff requests information that is required to complete the Team Decision-Making Activity Report. This includes the following:

- Date/Time TDM Requested
- Family name
- Address
- Telephone number(s)
- Child Welfare Case Number
- Name of Caseworker and Telephone number(s)
- Name of Supervisor and Telephone Number(s)
- Date/Time TDM Scheduled
- Facilitator Assignment
- TDM Number
- Site Location
- Name of Site Coordinator
- Site Coordination notification
- Type of TDM
- Type of Case
- Demographic information about all family/household members
- Security needs/special needs/safety alert
- Legal Status

Types of TDM and Scheduling

The type of TDM requested determines the priority of scheduling. TDM for changes in placement and permanency planning will be gradually phased in. The caseworker will indicate the TDM type and support staff will record the results on the Team- Decision Making Activity Report. Team- Decision Making will be utilized in the following situations:

- 1. When out of home placement for the child(ren) is being considered for safety and child protection or youth in conflict situations.
 - a. Considered Removal When the worker for the child(ren) determines that imminent risk may be present but the immediate safety of the child is not

threatened, a request for TDM will be made. Support staff will be contacted to schedule a TDM within 48 hours. TDMs must be held prior to a court hearing to take custody.

- b. Emergency Removal –Whenever the immediate safety of the child is threatened, the caseworker removes the child on an emergency basis and then requests a TDM as soon as possible or within 24 hours. Reserved Specified slots each day will be reserved to accommodate these emergency removals.
- 2. Placement moves The caseworker requests a TDM for changes of placement when the current placement begins to disrupt and the caseworker considers removing the child from their current setting. The caseworker also may request a TDM for changes in placement in cases where a safety issue at the placement has been identified. At implementation of the TDM process, the Department will perform these meetings only for children that have had an initial placement TDM.
- 3. Reunification When a child is being considered for reunification with a parent(s) after a stay in out-of-home placement, the TDM will be scheduled within five (5) days of the request. Prior to scheduling the TDM, the caseworker and supervisor will have determined that safety and risk factors have improved. Initially these TDM meetings will occur only on cases that have had an initial placement TDM.

Facilitator Assignment

A facilitator will be assigned and the caseworker will be informed of the assigned facilitator and his/her phone number. It is a goal of TDM to provide consistency and effective caseload management throughout the process. To achieve this goal, the following conditions must be met:

- A family will maintain the same facilitator throughout the TDM Process.
- An alternate facilitator will be assigned to the family if the original facilitator is unavailable. However, the original Facilitator will resume responsibility when he/she becomes available.
- Initial TDM assignments must be rotated to promote an effective caseload balance between the TDM types.
- The TDM Supervisor/F2F Project manager reserves the right to change facilitator assignments, based upon service needs.

Location of TDM

The caseworker will be notified at the time of the request of the location and the facilitator assigned will document that information on the Team Decision-Making Activity Report.

Preference should always be given to the location that is convenient for the family. Safety issues or special needs may limit the choice of locations. Meetings will be held at the Department of

Human Services when a security need or safety issue is identified. TDM Supervisor and facilitator will ensure policy is followed and security measures taken prior to the meeting. If the TDM is scheduled outside the El Paso County Department of Human Services at one of the community sites, the Site Coordinator will be contacted with the date, time and location of the TDM. Also, the Site Coordinator will be advised of any perceived safety or risk factors.

Special Needs

At the time of the referral, the caseworker will need to identify any special needs of any of the family members, i.e. wheelchair access, foreign-language interpreter, hearing-impaired, childcare, transportation, etc. The facilitator and caseworker may need to meet to find solutions for identified barriers.

Security Needs

When the caseworker identifies a family with a history of violent or threatening behavior, he/she has a duty to provide this information to the TDM staff. In these cases the caseworker and facilitator will meet prior to the TDM to discuss safety issues. The caseworker needs to identify the individual requiring the safety need, the type of need requested and the type of assistance to be provided. The facilitator will make whatever security arrangements are necessary. A family member could be excluded from the TDM if he/she poses a safety threat.

TDM Attendance

The caseworker will invite the family to the TDM, explain the purpose of the meeting and determine a convenient time for the TDM. The caseworker will explain to the family that they may invite anyone to the meeting who is a support to their family. Invitations may be extended to other family members, friends, the faith-based community and any others that are significant in their lives. Families are encouraged to think about the strengths they have and what supports are available to them. This information is given to the support staff person, who will schedule the TDM. This staff member will notify the facilitator, the caseworker, the caseworker's supervisor, the community representative from the child's neighborhood, and other service providers specifically dealing with the family of the date, time and location of the TDM. If the family requests that the community representative not attend, that request will be honored. The Guardian Ad Litem (GAL) and Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) will be invited when one is already assigned.

Preparation for TDM

The facilitator reviews information about the case that the caseworker has provided to the support person. A review of this information is made for safety issues and special needs to determine if a pre-conference is needed with the caseworker. The facilitator should have a clear understanding of the purpose of the meeting.

Child Protection Team meetings / Team Decision Making meetings

Child Protection Team (CPT) meetings sometimes will occur before the TDM and at times will follow the TDM. It is acknowledged that law establishes the CPT process and that the participants vary from those in attendance at TDM. It is imperative that the results from one meeting be shared as a part of the other.

Conducting a TDM Meeting:

A person, not otherwise involved in the case, will facilitate all TDM meetings in El Paso County. This facilitator will be hired, trained and supervised by the El Paso County Department of Human Services (see job description).

Steps for Conducting a TDM:

- 1. The facilitator is responsible for ensuring that the room is set up comfortably for the number of anticipated attendees. This should include having the materials necessary for conducting the meeting such as attendance logs, summary of decisions form, feedback forms and marker board or large sheet of paper with markers for "brainstorming" and noting solutions reached by the group.
- 2. The facilitator welcomes everyone and thanks everyone for agreeing to participate.
- **3.** The facilitator introduces himself/herself.
- **4.** The facilitator explains her/his role and the purpose of the TDM process with an emphasis on consensus decision-making, TDM core beliefs, and the goal of developing a specific plan that will ensure the safety and protection of the concerned children in the least restrictive manner possible. The facilitator hands out the feedback form and explains that participants will be asked to complete the form at the conclusion of the TDM. The facilitator explains that if consensus cannot be reached the DHS caseworker will make the decision and that any agreement must be based upon the safety of the child in the least restrictive environment. It is further explained that all decisions reached must be in compliance with all applicable laws and policies of DHS.

- **5.** The facilitator requests that all participants introduce themselves and describe their role and/or relationship to the family
- **6.** The facilitator explains the ground rules and steps of a TDM. The ground rules are:
 - **a.** The family's right to privacy and rules of confidentiality. (See guidelines)
 - **b.** All participants should have the opportunity to speak and be heard while receiving everyone's

full attention.

- **c.** All Participants must be treated with respect and dignity.
- **d.** All participants should be free to speak openly and honestly.
- **e.** The timeframe for the meeting is $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 hours.
- **f.** The goal is to reach a consensus and that decision will stand unless overruled by DHS for safety reasons or by the court.
 - **g.** The facilitator asks if everyone agrees with these rules and resolves any questions as to format
 - **h.** The TDM shall not be audio-taped or video-taped unless agreed to in writing by all the participants attending the TDM.
 - 7. Identification of the Issue(s): All team members are given the chance to discuss the concerns and issues that are placing the child at risk for harm. The caseworker presents the risk and safety assessment using the structured tool to be defined by EPCDHS and will present any other information gathered. The facilitator asks the parent(s) if they wish to share information about their family or situation. Other assessments, formal or informal, are presented as well. The facilitator involves other team members in the discussion and helps to clarify, paraphrase and summarize points of view as well as allow expression of feelings and reminds participants of ground rules and time constraints as necessary.
 - 8. Identification of Strengths: The strengths (attitudes/values, skills/abilities, attributes/features, preferences, and exceptions to the problem) of the family are elicited by the facilitator from the family and rest of the TDM team. Services the family has utilized previously are discussed in an effort to determine what has been helpful and what has not been helpful in the past.
 - 9. The facilitator leads a "brainstorming" search for solutions to the issues that place the child at risk. All participants are encouraged to contribute their ideas and the facilitator may choose to record them for all to see using marker board or flip chart. The discussion

should include important issues such as the basic need for food, clothing, transportation and shelter; medical/health needs; psychological needs; relationship needs, spiritual needs; respite/day care; educational/vocational needs and family dynamics. The facilitator ensures that all participants understand the process, that creativity is encouraged and that all ideas receive due consideration. If there are multiple needs/solutions, it may be necessary for the facilitator to help the group prioritize and develop the initial plan around these primary needs.

- 10. Decision: After the "brainstorming", the facilitator strives to move the group towards consensus. The facilitator helps the team review each idea and the possible ramifications (positive or negative) if implemented. If the decision is to remove the child or maintain the child out of the home, the facilitator moves the discussion to placement options. Relatives are first option to consider. If the decision is to maintain the child at home or return the child to his/her parent(s) or guardian, a safety plan with specific action steps must be developed in writing. This plan must specifically state:
 - A) What tasks need to be completed
 - B) Who will be responsible for the completion of each task
 - C) Timelines for accomplishment
 - D) What constitutes success or failure

The tasks to be completed by the family as well as other team members must be spelled out in enough detail to ensure that everyone understands what they are to do. If services are recommended which are not typically available or that must be individually created, the action plan will specify who will seek approval for funding such services and provide an answer by a specified date. The plan must identify what the caseworker will do to reduce risk factors and monitor the safety plan.

- 11. Closing/Wrap-up: The facilitator reviews the decision and ensures that everyone knows what they are to do and the dates for completion. (All participants at the TDM are given a copy of the plan at the end of the meeting.) The caseworker is given feedback at this time about the case and the plan developed. The facilitator reminds those that have attended about the feedback form and requests participants to complete it before leaving. The facilitator should be sensitive to the fact that a parent could be emotional about the issue of placement and may not want to complete the form. The facilitator sincerely wishes the family well and thanks everyone on the team for their participation and checks to make sure that everyone in attendance has been recorded on the sign-in sheet.
- 12. At the conclusion of the TDM, the facilitator asks if any of the DHS staff intends to have the decision appealed. If an appeal is requested an Administrative review will be scheduled. It must be heard as soon as possible, not to exceed the end of the next business day. Only agency staff including the facilitator may request the review. In addition, an Administrative Review may only be requested when there is a clear safety or policy violation. In situations where there is consistent misapplication of policy or procedures, this information will be forwarded to the appropriate supervisor / administrator. Only agency staff attend the administrative review. The caseworker, supervisor and facilitator provide a summary of the TDM, the circumstances leading to the Administrative Review and the alternative safety plans suggested at the TDM. The Administrator may question

the staff to clarify the situation. The Review Administrator makes the final decision to affirm or overturn the TDM's decision. The Review Administrator may choose to devise an alternate safety plan. The Review Administrator completes an Administrative Review Activity Report during this process. Following the review, the caseworker will notify all team members, including the family, of the appeal decision. The decision of the Administrative Review is final and the caseworker must fully support that decision.

- 13. At the conclusion of the TDM, The facilitator is responsible for completing the Team Decision Making Activity Report, checking for accuracy and recording the outcome data for self-evaluation purposes. Should the decision be made to return custody to parent(s), the Court will be contacted and a request shall be made to return custody to the parent. This may be accomplished prior to the PPP hearing. In the event that no further legal involvement is warranted, a copy of the TDM report will be sent to the Court following the Court's granting permission to vacate. A copy of the TDM report shall be provided to the Court at the PPP if the decision reached at the TDM warrants Court involvement. All necessary information will be entered into the Database to track outcomes from the TDM meeting. (Note: this database is being created in cooperation with Denver Co. DHS and will include at a minimum the following information. The plan is to enhance the database provided by Metis.):
- Type of TDM Meeting
- Number of times placement is required after TDM decision is made to maintain child in family home with a safety plan
- Number of changes in placement becomes necessary after TDM decision is made to maintain child in current foster placement.
- Type of participants attending the TDM meeting, including totals
- Response time to scheduling TDM meetings
- Outcomes of TDM
- Number of Administrative reviews and reason for review

JOB DESCRIPTION Team Decision Making Facilitator

General Statement of Duties

Coordinates and facilitates multi-disciplinary Team Decision Making (TDM) meetings at DHS and community sites in El Paso County for the Family to Family Initiative.

Job Requirements -

Provides positive and non-threatening atmosphere for families and professionals to meet to determine placement issues regarding children in the child welfare system. Meetings occur when an initial placement is being considered or following an emergency removal, for placement moves including kinship homes and when a child is to return home to the birth family.

Coordinates with staff from DHS and partner agencies to facilitate Team Decision Making process with families and professionals in the community.

Records attendance and takes notes during team decision making meeting and generates written reports from the meetings which are distributed to all parties involved in the process as soon as possible after meetings occur.

Mediates any disagreements during meeting process and proceeds toward a positive outcome and final decision about placement.

Provides culturally respectful climate for meetings including location an easily accessible location for families and interpreters available if necessary to alleviate potential language barriers.

Ensures that decisions made during Team Decision Making meetings are in concert with agency policies and procedures and state and federal laws, rules and regulations.

Minimum Qualifications

Skills / Knowledge and Ability Requirements

Knowledge of theories and practices of facilitation. Knowledge of group dynamics. Skill in the use of collaborative relationships in social work. Sensitivity to cultural issues as it affects all participants and the TDM process. Skill in independently adapting, interpreting and applying written guidelines, precedents and standardized work practices to a variety of unprecedented and potentially problematic situations.

Bachelor's degree in social work, social science or related field and 3-5 years of experience in a child welfare organization.

Extensive knowledge of overall operation of agency with emphasis in program areas 4 (Youth in Conflict), 5 (Child Protection) and 6 (Permanency).

Valid driver's license and reliable transportation.

Ability to maintain confidentiality regarding placement and familial issues.

Ability to use office equipment including computers, fax machines, copiers and telephones.

Ability to work independently and as a team player.

Ability to communicate clearly and effectively both orally and in writing.

Ability to communicate with people both individually and in a group setting.

Ability to lead a group presentation and discussion and mediate any disagreements if necessary.

Bilingual speakers encouraged to apply.

El Paso County Department of Human Services

105 N. Spruce Colorado Springs, Colorado 80903 (719)444-5700

	TEAM DECISION	<u>ON MAKING</u>			
Facilitator:	Meeting Date: Meeting		ng Time:		
Meeting Location:	Community location	DHS office	Other		
Family Name:		Household #:			
Type of Case:	Intake Ongoing _	Adolescent	_Court Yes/No		
CPA or Kinship Pro	vider # of l	Previous Placements			
Children Involved: Name		Age			
Who is in attendan	ce today? Rela	tionship to child?			
Staffing Type:		Diagram Manager			
Placement:	<u> </u>	Placement: Non-en	0 ,		
Placement: Placement C	Change	Return Home	Other		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre	Change essed:	Return Home	Other al Abuse		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre Substance A	Change essed: buse	Return Home Sexu Negl	Other al Abuse ect		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre Substance A Basic Needs	Change essed: buse /Physical Environment	Return Home Sexu Negl Emo	Other al Abuse ect tional Abuse		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre Substance A Basic Needs Domestic Re	Change essed: buse Physical Environment elationship / Family Violence	Return Home Sexu Negl Emo Emo	Other al Abuse ect tional Abuse tional Stability		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre Substance A Basic Needs Domestic Re Parenting Sk	Change essed: buse Physical Environment elationship / Family Violence kills	Return Home Sexu Negl Emo Emo Child	Other al Abuse ect tional Abuse tional Stability d's Needs		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre Substance A Basic Needs Domestic Re Parenting Sk Decision ma	change cssed: buse Physical Environment elationship / Family Violence kills king/Problem solving skills	Return Home Sexu Negl Emo Emo Chile	Other al Abuse ect tional Abuse tional Stability d's Needs ical Abuse		
Placement: Placement C Issues To Be Addre Substance A Basic Needs Domestic Re Parenting Sk Decision ma	change essed: buse /Physical Environment elationship / Family Violence kills king/Problem solving skills control of parent	Return Home Sexu Negl Emo Emo Chile	Other al Abuse ect tional Abuse tional Stability d's Needs		

Meeting Process:	the room during the meeting? YesNo
If YES, explain cir	
ir 125, explain on	Cambanees.
Needs of the Chile	dren / Family / Other
Strengths / Protec	ctive Capacity of the Child's Family / Support System:
Structured Decisi	on Making.
	ETY ASSESSMENT:
	Conditionally SafeUnsafeN/A
	Onditionally sureonsure1\/1
CURRENT RISK	LEVEL:
Low	ModerateHighIntensiveN/A
Overrides:	NoYes
Immediate Safe	
	and Other Family Members Will Pursue:
Need to be	Activity Person Responsible Time Lines
Addressed	

Services the Departm Service	nent of Human Services will Provide to Su Person Responsible	upport the Family's Plan: Time Lines
Community Service	es to Support the Family's Plan:	
Benefits of Complia	ance with this Plan:	
Consequences of No	on-Compliance with this Plan:	
Alternate / Concur	rent Plan:	
reassessment 2. Does the visitatio current place 3. Have the fam	significant change in the risk / safety assest tool? Yes No N/A on reflect that the child can return home safe	fely or remain in their o N/A ough cooperation and shown rant reunification?

***If 1, 2 &3 are Yes, the family is eligible for reunification – Review Safety Assessment ***If either 1, 2 or 3 is No, the family is not eligible for reunification at this time.

PLACEMENT CHANGE:

Appeal: Yes No

Placement is stable enough for child to remain in current home? Yes No N/A
 Provider is confident they can provide for the needs of the child to remain in their current placement?
 Yes No N/A

***If either 1 or 2 are No, placement change considered to be in child's best interest.

DECISION REACHED: PlacementIntensify Current Plan / CorConcurrent PlanReturn HomePlacement ChangeCourt involvementComments	ntinue Reunifi		_			
PLEASE SIGN AND MARK YOU	R POSITION	REGARDING T Understand		SION Do Not Support		

Administrative Review – TDM Family Name: _____ Review Date: _____ Time: _____ HH#_____ TDM Date:_____ Time:____ Review Administrator: Title: Caseworker: CW Supervisor: Attended - Yes □ No □ Attended - Yes □ No □ Facilitator Supervisor:_____ Facilitator: Attended - Yes □ No □ Attended - Yes □ No □ Other staff attending: _____ Title:_____ Title: Type of TDM □ Removal ☐ Permanency Planning □ Reunification □ Placement change Appealed by: Title: Reason appealed: □ Policy issue □ Safety issue Explanation: New Information:

2/27/2003

Decision:

Team Decision-Making Survey

Date:							
For each item identified below, circle the number to the right that best fits your judgment of its quality. Use the scale on the right to select the quality number.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
QUESTION			SCALE				
1. I feel that the group heard the comments that I made during the team decision-making meeting.	1	2	3	4	5		
2. I feel that my comments during the team decision-making meeting were considered before a decision was made.	1	2	3	4	5		
3. I believe a decision was made <u>at</u> this meeting rather than <u>before</u> this meeting was held.		2	3	4	5		
4. I felt included in the team decision making process	1	2	3	4	5		
5. The team decision-making process was explained to me before the meeting started.	1	2	3	4	5		
6. I believe that team decision-making is a worthwhile process.	1	2	3	4	5		
7. I believe that decisions made by groups are better than decisions made by one person.	1	2	3	4	5		
8. I had the opportunity to say what I wanted in this meeting.	1	2	3	4	5		
9. I believe that the children will benefit from this meeting.		2	3	4	5		
10. I feel more informed than I did before.		2	3	4	5		
11. I feel I can work with the people who attended this meeting.	1	2	3	4	5		
12. The facilitator made sure the ground rules were followed during the meeting.	1	2	3	4	5		
13. The facilitator moved the meeting along at a reasonable pace.	1	2	3	4	5		
14. I understood my role in the team decision-making process.		2	3	4	5		
15. The facilitator clearly identified my responsibility to the safety plan.		2	3	4	5		
Comments:							
Relationship to Family: □Parent □Relative □Living together partner □PA4 worker □PA5 □Supervisor □Community advocate □Site coordinator □ Services p □Neighbor □Foster parent □School staff □GAL □CASA □Ot	rovider		A6 worl ild □F				

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey Your input counts!

2/27/2003